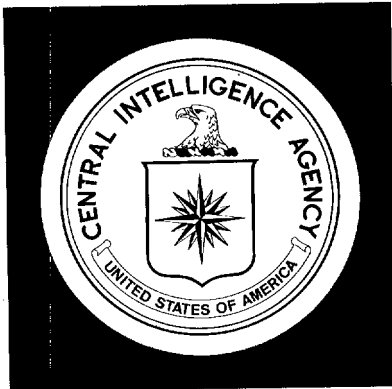


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Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

KOREA: North-South contacts are increasing in pace and scope. (Page 1)

CAMBODIA: Government forces make little headway.
(Page 3)

USSR: Brezhnev apparently is recovering (Page 5)

LAOS: Communists strike irregulars in north Laos
(Page 5)

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KOREA: Saturday's agreement on the composition and functions of a Coordinating Committee for national unification presages a quickening in the pace and scope of North-South contacts, but neither side is contemplating steps that would significantly modify its domestic social or political institutions.

The agreement was fashioned in three days of negotiations in Pyongyang between South Korean CIA Director Yi Hu-rak and senior North Korean officials--including Kim Il-sung--and made public on 4 November. It charges the ten-man committee to discuss a broad range of political, social, and economic matters in meetings that will be held alternately in Seoul and Pyongyang every two or three months. Detailed studies will, in addition, be undertaken by various subcommittees, and a joint secretariat will be established in Panmunjom.

The two sides agreed to end on 10 November propaganda activities directed at each other. Yi also stated in a press conference in Seoul that a whole range of "cooperative endeavors" with the North had been discussed. He cited as examples a proposal by Kim Il-sung to permit South Korean fishing boats in northern waters and a suggestion by President Pak Chong-hui that the two sides jointly develop tourism.

Yi's statement lends credence to other recent indications that the two sides may be considering steps beyond the scope of their present contacts. Constitutional reforms under way in both countries, for example, may be designed in part to facilitate a future loose confederation under which both would retain their political and social systems while working toward unification. Any arrangement would, of course, be preceded by considerable direct contacts as envisaged in the 4 November agreement, including perhaps an eventual summit between the leaders of the two sides.

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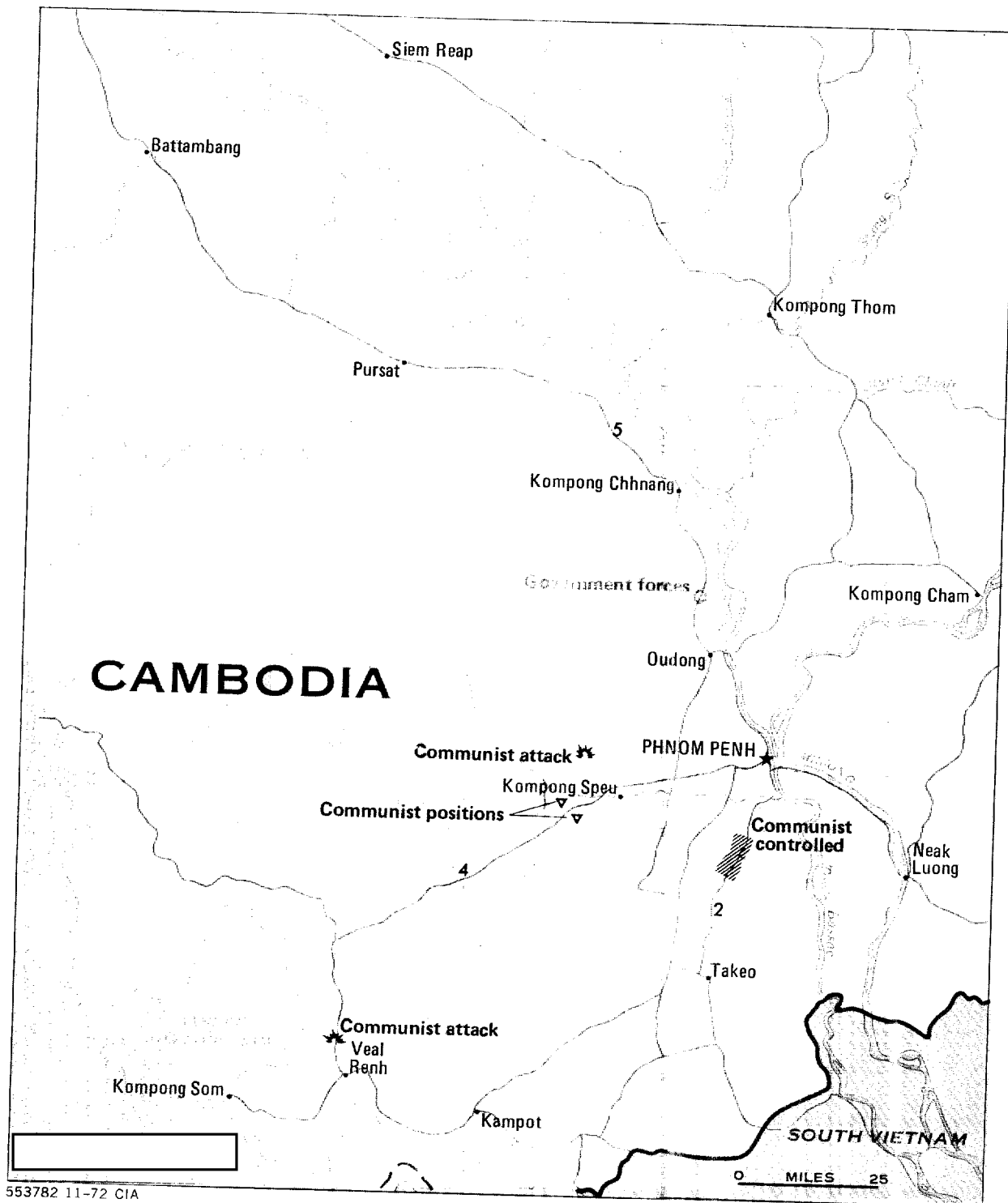
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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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CAMBODIA: Government forces continue to make little headway in their efforts to reopen several key highways.

The initial attempt by five government battalions to clear a short stretch of Route 4, some ten miles southwest of the town of Kompong Speu, has faltered in the face of sharp resistance. Preliminary reports indicate that Khmer Communist units are well-entrenched in high-ground positions overlooking the interdicted section of the roadway, and that the Cambodians will have to depend heavily on air strikes to help dislodge them. Meanwhile, the Communists are carrying out harassing attacks against other government positions scattered along Route 4.

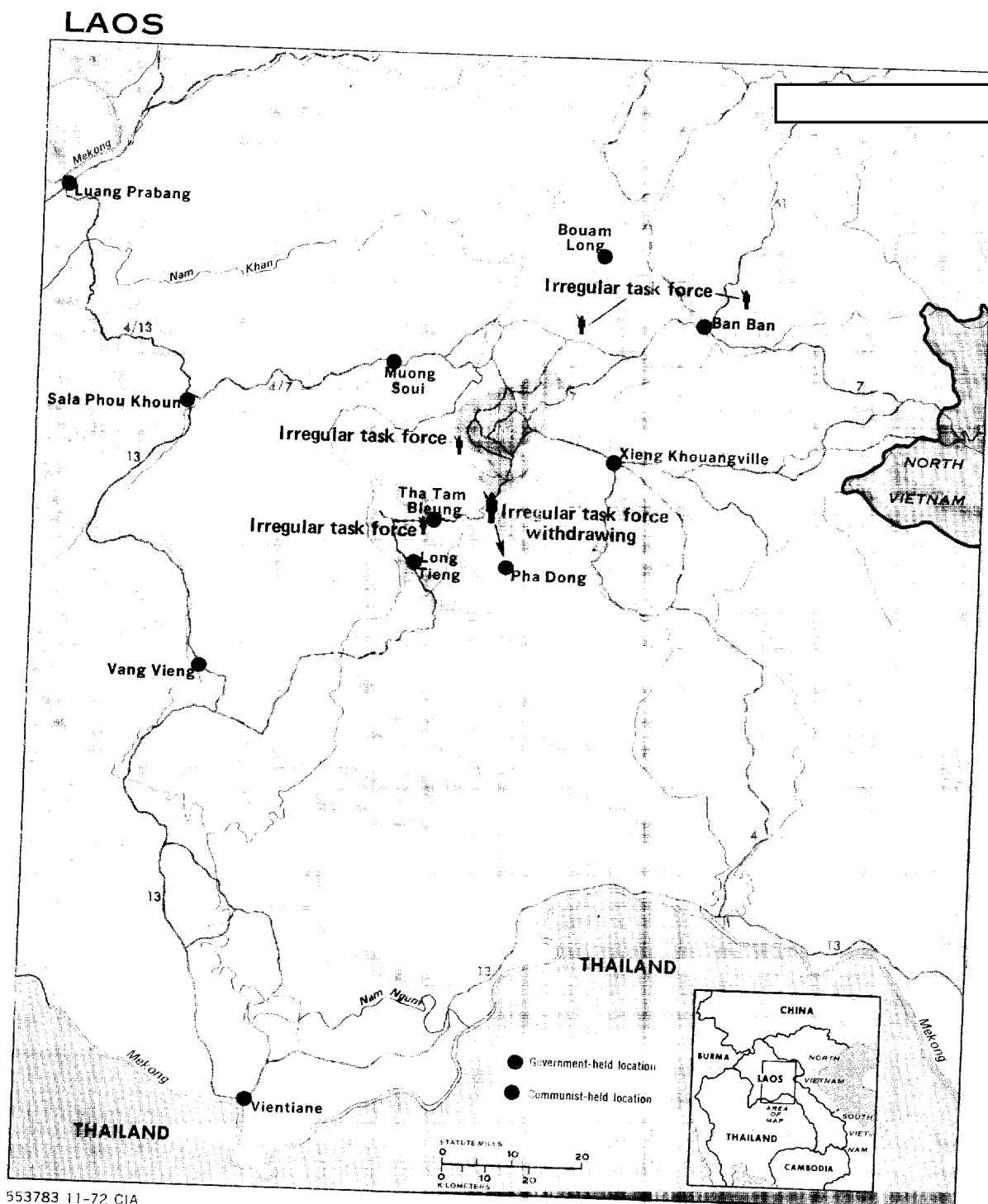
The government operation in the northwest to reopen a portion of Route 5 north of the town of Oudong remains static, largely because of recent command and discipline problems. The addition over the weekend of four elite Khmer Krom battalions to the operation may give it a badly needed boost. There are indications, however, that the Khmer Communists are determined to oppose any attempts to clear the highway, which has been closed since mid-August.

In the south, Khmer Communist troops in Takeo Province are maintaining their pressure against Route 2, and now hold about a ten-mile segment of that road, between Phnom Penh and the provincial capital at Takeo. The Communists are also keeping up their harassing attacks against the few remaining Cambodian positions on Route 2 just south of Takeo. Demoralized government forces in Takeo have not offered any serious resistance to the current Communist campaign, and there are as yet no signs that Phnom Penh is preparing to give them any substantial assistance.

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USSR: General Secretary Brezhnev apparently is recovering from the reported illness that has kept him out of public view since 11 October. The Soviet press has announced that Bulgarian First Secretary Zhivkov will visit Moscow in mid-November, and Brezhnev is expected to receive him. In addition, [REDACTED] Brezhnev has scheduled a visit to Hungary at the end of the month. If his health has improved sufficiently, Brezhnev should appear in public today and tomorrow to preside over festivities for the anniversary of the revolution. [REDACTED]

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LAOS: The Communists have again struck hard against irregular forces in north Laos. After several days of preparation, elements of two North Vietnamese regiments on 2 and 3 November carried out ground assaults and heavy shellings against the irregular task force that had been trying to regroup along a ridge about four miles south of the Plaine des Jarres. The attacks forced the irregulars to abandon their positions in that area, and most of them have now fallen back to Pha Dong--some ten miles south of the Plaine's southern edge. It seems unlikely that this task force, which is the largest of Vang Pao's forces operating against the Plaine, will be able to mount any new offensive operations in the near future. Consequently, the Communists are now in a position to confront Vang Pao's smaller task forces west and north of the Plaine. [REDACTED]

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